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ABSTRACT

There has been a recent surge in the popularity of youth fantasy books; this can be partially attributed to the popularity of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. Librarians and others who recommend books to youth are having a difficult time suggesting other fantasy books to those who have read the Harry Potter series and want to read other similar fantasy books, because they are not as familiar with the youth fantasy genre as with other genres. This study analyzed a list of youth fantasy books and compared them to the books in the Harry Potter series, through a breakdown of their fantasy elements (i.e., fantasy subgenres, main characters, secondary characters, plot elements, and miscellaneous elements). Books chosen for the study were selected from lists of youth fantasy books recommended to fantasy readers and others that are currently in print. The study provides a resource for fantasy readers by quantifying the elements of the youth fantasy books, as well as creating a guide for those interested in the Harry Potter books. It also helps fill a gap in the research of youth fantasy. Appendices include a youth fantasy reading list, the coding sheet, data tables, and final annotated book list. (Contains 10 references and 9 tables.) (Author/MES)

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DISCOVERING BY ANALYSIS
HARRY POTTER AND YOUTH FANTASY

A Master's Research Paper Proposal
submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library and Information Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Library and Information Science

by

Emily R. Center

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

Fantasy literature can trace its roots back into mythology, folklore, and faery tales—stories that deal with things unknown and impossible in our world. Some of the earliest and best-known fantasy works are *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, a book regarded as a turning point in children's literature, and *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkein, who is often deemed the father of modern fantasy. Although modern fantasy is frequently considered a meritless genre, the literature commands a loyal readership of children, teenagers, and adults—readers so loyal that they dip into fantasy books outside those designated for their age groups looking for those which will satisfy their hunger for myth and hero and fantastical things. The fantasy genre has a limited amount of critical study and writing; yet, it remains an important literary genre and a powerful force among its readership.

Problem

There has been a recent surge in the popularity of youth fantasy with the conception of the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling and the discovery of these fantasy books by children, young adults, and adults. Readers have discovered that they can share the secret world of Harry Potter with Harry Potter—a secret world in which sorcerers are teachers, and their students, who are learning the ways of magic, are not immune to school competition or daily chores. This propitiation of youth fantasy has created the need for librarians and booksellers to be aware of other fantasy works containing similar characteristics as the *Harry Potter* books and to be able to make recommendations accordingly. So far there are four *Harry Potter* books (in the end to be seven)—not enough in devoted readers' opinion, though they read them over and over again. But *Harry Potter* has given them the flavour of fantasy, and they are hungry for more. Yet many

librarians, booksellers, and readers (especially those new to the genre, having become interested through the *Harry Potter* series) have a difficult time finding other fantasy books that would be of interest, because they are not familiar with the genre or they do not view fantasy as a legitimate literary genre that has merit for youth.

Eva Mitnick (2000) asks if the alluring elements and irresistibility of the Harry Potter books mean that there are no other books that will measure up to the new standard set. "Never fear!" she says. "Children's authors have been busily writing first-rate fantasy novels for decades" (32). Though there are "stand-by" fantasy series and books that are prominent, such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkein, and *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle, there are also many other fantasy books that are not as eminent. Some of these worthwhile books are passed by and ignored simply because those recommending fantasy reading materials to young adults are not familiar with their contents or have never come in contact with them. They have a limited base of knowledge with which to respond to the answer of Mitnick's question: "When a young patron asks for another book 'like Harry Potter,' what exactly is he or she looking for?" (32).

A search for information on fantasy, its definitions, subgenres, classifications, and importance has revealed a lack of literature and study on the topic of children's fantasy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to seek out youth fantasy books and to analyze their content, comparing similarities and differences in their characters, plots, and other fantastical elements. Major thematic and recurring elements of the *Harry Potter* series—the use of good and evil magic, magical folk and common people ("muggles"), humour, mystery, self-discovery quest, sports/contests, and persistent symbols—will be analyzed. The study will also examine

the primary and secondary characters to determine the frequency and importance of family members, friends, fantastical creatures (dragons, unicorns, etcetera), and mythical beings. These elements will then be sought in other youth fantasy books to determine if and how often these same elements are found in them, and used to compare the books to each other. Whereas similarities in fantasy books might be noted and used to recommend related books by those doing reader's advisory, the information gathered through this content analysis will help quantify and objectify similarities in the youth fantasy literature studied.

This study will also help fill the gap that exists in youth fantasy research.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined.

A *youth* is a person of nine to fifteen years of age, in a school-grade range of 4th to 9th grade.

A *fantasy* book is one that contains fictional events, characters, or other elements that are impossible in the world as we know it. The genre is closely related to science fiction and horror, sharing elements with each.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by time and by publication status of the books. It is not exhaustive. There are many fantasy books that are allocated for youth readers. Not all of these books could be read and evaluated. Books written primarily for an adult audience have not been considered, though a large percentage of fantasy readers cross over from one age group into others. Collections of short stories have not been used—the focus of this study is on novels. Also, youth fantasy books not in print have not been included. This is done to ensure that access to the books involved in the study is available.

CHAPTER II.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature related to youth fantasy, including studies performed and information collected, was conducted to provide background information on the subject. The focus of the quest was to seek a definition of "fantasy" so as to determine what constitutes fantasy books, to reveal what makes fantasy important and why readers are so devoted to it, and to discover the effect of the *Harry Potter* series on the genre and its readers. It was noted that the children's and youth fantasy genre has a limited amount of investigative study devoted to it, and the recency of the *Harry Potter* books allows for a virtual lack of critical writing on the topic.

Arriving at an Understanding

A persistent issue in the literature is the desire, attempt, and need to define the genre of fantasy, before attempting to study it and comment upon it. Ruth Nadelman Lynn (1989) begins her attempt to define fantasy by utilizing the Oxford English Dictionary and the etymology of the word "fantasy." She discusses critical definitions that fluctuate from the vague to the overly complicated, determining that critics, readers, and writers have expanded upon dictionary and critical definitions to include their own interpretations, and that it is difficult to restrict "fantasy" to a single definition.

Diana Tixier Herald (1999) and Cathi Dunn MacRae (1998) both also discuss attempts to define fantasy. Herald determines that fantasy invokes impressions and images such as princesses, wizards, shape-changing persons, sword fighting, and grand palaces. MacRae suggests that those accustomed to fantasy recognize the way it feels. Both agree that fantasy as a genre has no authoritative definition. Herald declares that an attempt to succinctly define fantasy

will result in disagreements between authors and readers, many of whom have strong and forceful feelings about the genre and their way of perceiving it, even though the fantasy line reaches back into the earliest of human history, into fairy and folk tales, legends, and fables.

Sheila A. Egoff (1995) attempts to define fantasy by its subgenres and through its history from myth, folklore, and legend, explaining that "there seem to be no fixed boundaries enclosing the territory of fantasy, but there are some guideposts that can direct our footsteps" (2-3). She explains myth, folklore, and legend, their differences and commonalities. She continues by saying that the two fantasy subgenres that can most readily be identified as fantasy are those that remain close to their historical roots, these being the literary fairy tale and the epic fantasy. She defines fantasy subgenres, and then attempts to define fantasy as "a story in which the sustaining pleasure is that created by the deliberate abrogation of any natural law, no matter how slight, or by the taking of a step beyond it" (17). This broad definition leaves much space for personal interpretation and seems to support Lynn's idea that fantasy cannot be explained by a single narrow definition.

David Gooderham (1995) especially finds it difficult to define children's fantasy; a language for discussing children's fantasy texts is not readily accessible, because children's literature in general receives hand-me-down language that has been used with adult literature and may not be entirely functional to the discussion of children's literature. He surmises that a categorization of fantasy texts may be the only way to define children's fantasy, even though through categorization no definition is produced, merely a list of standard components. He proposes an anatomy that would not only list the elements of children's fantasy, but also illustrate their practical relationships.

Most bibliographic sources in which fantasy novels have been categorized, categorize them by subgenres, in an attempt to define and profile the boundaries of fantasy. These subgenres, with related themes and details, help define fantasy by defining themselves and the books included within them. The themes and details comprising the subgenres are categorized in order to help people find books and authors within their reading interests. MacRae (1998) defines six major subgenres to fantasy: alternate worlds, magic realism, myth, legends, magic bestiary, and time fantasy. Herald's (1999) list is more divided (perhaps because she takes into account both adult and children's fantasy) and consists of sword and sorcery; saga, myth, and legend; fairy tales; humor; a bestiary; world of faerie; contemporary fantasy; alternate and parallel worlds; time travel; paranormal powers; graphic novels; celebrity characters; shared worlds; dark fantasy; fantasy featuring detection; and romantic fantasy. Herald includes itemized details with her descriptions of each book, including such details as whether or not the book involves dragons, mystery, magic, and other fantasy elements—another useful element for determining related books of interest.

Frances A. Dowd and Lisa C. Taylor (1992) conducted a content analysis of twenty-five youth fantasy books to determine similarities among them and to discover any typical youth fantasy subgenre or characteristics. They identified youth fantasy novels from lists. Because they could discover no list of characteristics used to identify or analyze fantasy, they created an analysis worksheet that covered the topics of subgenre, character, conflict, theme, setting, presence of magic/supernatural, mood, narrative order, and point of view. They concluded that fantasy incorporates a wide variety of these topics, though there are also similarities within the genre, and that because of this, fantasy rejects being organized and classified.

The Power of Fantasy

The fantasy genre is appealing and important, and it attracts a loyal audience of readers. Cooper (1990) says that people need myths, adventures, and heroes to believe in—that these needs are part of the collective unconscious of humanity that is touched by fantasy. Fantasy is a fulfillment of an inner need and desire to believe in something greater—it is the creation of myths: "The myths tell me where I am. Fantasy tells me where I am" (307). Cooper asserts that there is a pattern that is typically followed in fantasy, and that though the story changes, the theme remains the same: a hero leaves the familiar and enters the unknown in search of something, and on his/her search he/she has adventures and achieves his/her quest, while at the same time improving upon himself/herself. Genuine fantasy, says Cooper, always contains this design somewhere within. It is the human need for the ritualization, archetypes, and truth that fantasy offers that makes fantasy necessary for readers. This is why fantasy books "seem to fit [readers] just right" (314).

Tamora Pierce (1993) says that fantasy, because it seems to have little to do with reality, is "a literature of possibilities" (50). Fantasy challenges readers, allows them to dream, and provides them with the power of myths and legends. Pierce also describes fantasy as "a literature of empowerment" (51). She says that youth have little say in what happens in the real world, but the characters in fantasy books are always empowered, even while retaining very human traits and flaws. But empowerment does not necessarily bring ease and luxury; indeed, empowerment brings trials. Through these trials, says Pierce, and the struggle between the powerless and the powerful, youth can gain hope for the struggles in their own lives and their abilities to overcome.

David Gooderham (1995) agrees with Pierce and Cooper, explaining that fantasy is a metaphorical mode of literature. He says that fantasy substitutes the real for the imaginary, but that the real is conveyed through metaphor. Thus, this literature that would appear to be merely a diversion from normal human experience is actually a manner of discussing the experience in an unexpected way. He says that the metaphorical images can touch a child more powerfully and deeply than a comparable realistic book can.

In the course of 5 ½ years, from 1991 to 1997, librarian Cathi Dunn MacRae (1998) conducted a study among junior and senior high students in the United States (with a focus in the Boulder, Colorado area) to determine their fantasy reading interests and to understand what it is they like about fantasy books. Fifty teenagers participated in the study in Boulder, and twenty-three young adults in the United States shared their fantasy preferences by answering a questionnaire MacRae developed. She says that young adult fantasy fanatics are "among the most voracious, curious, and imaginative young adult readers" (xiv) and that they are very particular about what they like to read; though some of them delve into the related genres of horror and science fiction, very few will read realistic fiction or nonfiction. This determination that young adults are very particular as to what they read leads to the purpose of her study—"to portray fantasy as a complex genre in great demand by many of the most motivated teenaged readers and to describe its subgenres clearly so that YA readers—and those who connect them to books—may map the journey to another good book" (xxiii).

Working Towards Harry Potter and Beyond

In the course of literature, children's fantasy, outside its mythological and fairy tale roots, is a relatively young form and historically unimportant, but it has been growing and gaining stature in the past few decades. Sheila A. Egoff (1988) traces children's fantasy from the Middle

Ages to the 1980s. She says that children's fantasy literature made its first appearance with John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, during a time when children were seen as "little people." Outside of a few adult stories that children would pick up, not much was written for them. A revolutionary change in children's literature came to pass in the Victorian age when Lewis Carroll published *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, says Egoff. During this time fantasy authors Dickens, Thackery, Andersen, Kingsley, Carroll, and MacDonald created nonsense, revived the faeries, entered dreams, and established respect for children's literature. From this change in perception, children's fantasy began to evolve. Edith Nesbit created the rules for using magic, J.R.R. Tolkein introduced the world to the hobbit hole, and C.S. Lewis entered the land of Narnia. Since the 1970s the amount of children's fantasy literature and its popularity seem to have grown exponentially as the genre has evolved. Since the 1970s the number of fantasy books has more than doubled (Dowd and Taylor 1991, 175).

The growth and interest in youth fantasy is especially apparent with the explosive popularity of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the first in the series, was copyrighted in 1997). Sharon Moore (1999) explains why the books are well loved. She says that children can relate to the *Harry Potter* books because they take place in modern day and Harry is a regular kid who does not live in a faery-tale world. Other things about the books also make them appealing—the language, the names, the adventures, the danger, the magic classes, and Harry's empowerment. Moore collected letters written by children that included reasons about how and why they love the *Harry Potter* books; these letters include reasons that Cooper, Pierce, and Gooderham say make fantasy powerful: empowerment, struggle of the powerless against the powerful, a hero, adventures, and archetypal images.

There are four *Harry Potter* books currently in print, but readers are anxious for more. Eve Mitnick (2000) describes a common scenario in a library where a girl asks for a *Harry Potter* book; the librarian (amazingly) has a copy of all four, but the girl has already read them many times, and wonders when there will be more. The librarian tries to recommend a book, which is later found stuck on a shelf someplace else. Mitnick says that many people find the loyalty of *Harry Potter* fans astonishing, but fantasy fans do not because they realize the power of fantasy and they recognize the alluring elements in Rowling's books. However, when children want another *Harry Potter* book—one that has not been published yet—what can they do? Mitnick says that excellent fantasy books have been being written for years, and she suggests a short list of titles that may entice children. These titles all have an element in common with Rowling's books, such as a wizard-in-training, magic in the familiar world, British location and language, terrible adults, humour, and /or destiny.

With the influx of interest in youth fantasy, it is important to be aware of fantasy books and authors. MacRae (1998) suggests that librarians and teachers who may advise young adults in reading materials are not familiar with the fantasy available to readers, and that since they may not be fans of the genre, they do not consider fantasy valid or important literature (even though fantasy comes from an historical past and contains insightful messages for youth), and therefore these librarians and teachers do not recommend fantasy to young adult readers.

CHAPTER III.

METHODOLOGY

The information for this study was gleaned through a content analysis of young adult fantasy books. In order to identify a classification of youth fantasy titles for ages nine to fifteen that are currently available to libraries and the general populace, a list was determined by finding titles listed under the "fantasy" heading in Bowker's *Children's Books in Print: Subject Guide* (2000). Lists of the top fantasy books for young readers out of *Booklist*, *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults* (Lynn), and *Presenting Young Adult Fantasy Fiction* (MacRae) continued defining the list of fantasy titles. Remaining titles were selected from various "If you liked the Harry Potter books, then try..." lists from public libraries put together by librarians and teachers. Titles from the compiled list were compared against *Books in Print* as well as bookstore sales to make sure they are all currently accessible (in print/for sale). The final selection of youth fantasy books for the study was taken from this assemblage (see Appendix A).

The prototypical book(s) for the study were from the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, beginning with the first four in the series (all that have been published up to the point the research for this paper was completed). Information from these books was the foundation of the coding sheet used to analyze the other books chosen. Since a review of the literature provided no scholarly studies made comparing the *Harry Potter* books with other youth fantasy books, a preliminary coding sheet was developed (see Appendix B). This coding sheet covered major elements in the *Harry Potter* books and other key aspects of the stories and the characters, such as subgenre categories, the ages and sexes of the main characters, the makeup of secondary characters, the prevalence of magic, the location/setting, and other miscellaneous elements. The

characteristics worksheet provided by Dowd and Taylor (1992) helped provide the structure for this coding sheet.

The subgenre list was comprised of five categories, which were taken from classifications defined by MacRae (1998), Herald (1999), and Lynn (1989). Those chosen to be included in the analysis were alternate and parallel worlds (where the action takes place in a fully-created world other than our own), myth and legend (hero or epic stories concerned chiefly with the battle of Good versus Evil), bestiary (in which beasts are given human qualities and abilities), magic realism (realistic stories into which magic or the unrealistic enters), and literary faery tale (rewritten or imitated faery tales). An "other" category was also included for fantasy that does not fit into the chosen categories.

Analysis of the main characters included their humanity, sex, and age, as well as their magical capabilities and their familial status (orphan or not). Secondary characters were categorized by type: royalty/nobility, witch/wizard, religious rank, parent/sibling, animal, mystical beast (unicorn, dragon, etcetera), mythical being (faery, elf, ogre, etcetera), muggle (nonbeliever of magic), friend, teacher, enemy, and other.

Plot elements made up another section of study. This section consisted of setting (time and place), major themes (Good vs. Evil, coming of age, prophecy fulfillment), and specific elements included as part of the plot (war/battle, quest, travel, etcetera).

The final section of the analysis was made up of miscellaneous items. They were significant or persistent items, symbols, or numbers; the use of humour and hope and/or despair; whether or not the hero has a mortal enemy; and sexual awareness of the characters within the book.

Space was provided for notes about other fantasy elements, important details, or information concerning the book that should be taken into consideration.

After the books were read and analyzed, the results of the analysis were calculated and tabulated. The presentation of these figures follows in this paper.

CHAPTER IV.

ANALYSIS: "IF YOU LIKE THE *HARRY POTTER* BOOKS..."

The information from this study is a result of reading and analyzing 35[1] youth fantasy books. This report makes use of tables[2] and lists. The tables give the frequency each item was found in the books analyzed; the lists are book titles arranged in alphabetical order, unless otherwise noted.

Fantasy Subgenres

In studying fantasy an important factor is the fantasy subgenre. This study focused on five subgenres of fantasy. Some youth fantasy books are difficult to distinguish between alternate world and magic realism. Alternate world fantasy takes place in a world different than the one we live in—it can be our world in a different time or dimension, a place entered through a portal in our world, or a different world entirely. Magic realism takes our world and adds a bit of magic to it. For this study the *Harry Potter* books have been classified under the alternate-world fantasy category. Though a portion of the books take place in the world [England] as we know it with cars and newspapers and muggles, the majority of the series takes place in a parallel dimension—a place that can only be arrived at by entering a train platform that does not exist for the normal person. By entering the platform and boarding the train, students (who are in training to becoming witches and wizards) are taken to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The school is a different world outside of the real world, and it is a place where magic is common.

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[1] The data for six books are not included in this report, because they did not fit the qualifications.

[2] The tables were generated in Microsoft Excel, and percentages and totals configured through that program were rounded to the nearest whole number. Therefore, the sums of the percentages found in the "Total" may appear to be wrong but are not.

Every book in this study was classified by fantasy subgenre. Table 1 shows the distribution of the fantasy subgenres in the books read for this analysis.

Table 1.

Fantasy subgenres of youth fantasy books, by frequency and percentage.

SUBGENRE	f	%
Magic Realism	12	40
Alternate Worlds	11	37
Myth & Legend	3	10
Bestiary	2	7
Literary Fairy Tale	1	3
Other	1	3
TOTAL	**30**	**100**

Though thirty books were classified for this study, only 29 were used in the remainder of the research paper. One book did not fall under the fantasy genre; it was counted under the "other" heading in Table 1. Eleven books were counted under the subheading of alternate worlds and twelve were magic realism. The titles most similar to the *Harry Potter* series in genre were the alternate world fantasies, and they are listed below:

1. The Blue Sword
2. The Book of Three
3. Dealing With Dragons
4. Dragonsong
5. The Golden Compass
6. Islands in the Sky
7. Of Two Minds
8. A Plague of Sorcerers
9. Sandry's Book
10. A Wizard of Earthsea
11. Wizard's Hall

(The complete list of books, with author and copyright date can be found in Appendix A.)

Some of these alternate world fantasies were very similar to the *Harry Potter* books in that they shared many aspects of magic realism.

Main Characters

Harry Potter is an orphan with dark, unruly hair and a lightning-bolt-shaped scar on his forehead. He lives a miserable life with the Dursleys, his aunt and uncle and cousin. And though strange things have happened to him throughout his life, he does not realize he has any magic skills until he receives a letter inviting him to Hogwarts and meets Hagrid (the giant). Main characters are important to study. Youth will often identify with a main character or grow attached to that character and want to read more books with that character or similar ones.

In this study secondary characters were tabulated by attribute. Table 2 shows the break up of attributes of the main character by the type of being, sex, and age; it also includes the Harry Potter traits of being magical and being an orphan.

Table 2.

The attributes of the main character, in frequency and percentage.

BEING	f	%	SEX	f	%	AGE	f	%
Human	25	86	Male	13	45	Youth	25	86
Other	4	14	Female	11	38	Adult	1	3
			Multiple Chars.	5	17	N/A	3	10
TOTAL	**29**	**100**		**29**	**100**		**29**	**100**

OTHER	f	%
Magical	15	52
Orphan	14	48
TOTAL	**29**	**100**

Of the 29 books read, 25 used humans as the main characters. Thirteen books had male main characters (though the books with multiple main characters also included males). Twenty-five main characters were youth or young adults. These are general attributes as would likely be found in other youth books. However, the strongest similarities to Harry Potter come with the

comparison of orphaned[3] and/or magical youth. Though fifteen books had magical main characters, and fourteen books had orphaned main characters, nine books had both:

1. The Blue Sword (female)
2. The Folk Keeper (female)
3. The Golden Compass (female)
4. The Lives of Christopher Chant (male)
5. The Lost Years of Merlin (male)
6. A Plague of Sorcerers (male)
7. Sandry's Book (multiple characters)
8. The Savage Damsel and the Dwarf (female)
9. A Wizard of Earthsea (male)

However, the magical quality of the main character is an important feature, even alone. Some characters are born with magic, others must learn spells or read magic books. Characters who are magical or able to use magic are in the following books:

1. The Boggart (male, nonhuman)
2. Hob and the Goblins (male, nonhuman)
3. Of Two Minds (male and female)
4. So You Want to Be a Wizard (female)
5. Which Witch? (male and female)
6. Wizard's Hall (male)

Secondary Characters

Harry Potter had friends, enemies, professors, and relatives playing important parts in his life. Secondary characters add depth and interest to a story. Harry's friends Hermione and Ron spend time with Harry, get in arguments, study with each other, and help Harry escape his mortal enemy Voldemort. They are true friends to Harry, as are some of Harry's professors and others that Harry meets. But Harry's enemies are total enemies—they want to see Harry humiliated,

[3] For the purpose of this study, the term "orphan" has been used broadly. Though a character may have one or both parents living, the character may not be aware of them or he/she may be completely ignored by the parent. An "orphan" is a person growing up without parental love, guidance, or care. However, the book must make a point of the lack parental relationship in order for the main character to be counted in the orphan category.

cheated, and even dead. New characters appear in each of the *Harry Potter* books, and every one enhances the story. Secondary characters play an important role in the story, balancing the main character and adding interest. Table 3 displays an accounting for the secondary characters of the books analyzed, the percentage of that type of character overall, and the percentage of that character type found in the 29 books.

Table 3.

The main characteristic of secondary characters by frequency[4], percentage of total secondary characters, and percentage found in books analyzed.

SECONDARY CHARACTERS	f	% of total	% of books
Friend	22	20	76
Enemy	17	15	59
Witch/Wizard	14	13	48
Parent/Relative	12	11	41
Royalty/Nobility	8	7	28
Animal	8	7	28
Teacher	7	6	24
Other	7	6	24
Muggle	6	5	21
Mythical Being	5	5	17
Mystical Beast	4	4	14
TOTAL	**111**	**100**	

Friends were the most common secondary character found in the books analyzed—22 books used friends as important characters; the next most common character, with seventeen counts, was the enemy to the main character. Witches and relatives were the next most frequent. Books that made strong use of secondary characters and employed at least three of the four most recurrent are listed below:

1. The Blue Sword
2. The Book of Three
3. Dealing With Dragons
4. The Golden Compass

[4] Secondary characters were only given one mark per book. Therefore, a book may have had fifteen secondary-character witches, but the "witch" character would have only been marked once.

5. The Lives of Christopher Chant
6. The Lost Years of Merlin
7. Of Two Minds
8. A Plague of Sorcerers
9. Princess Nevermore
10. So You Want to Be a Wizard
11. Which Witch?
12. A Wizard of Earthsea
13. Wizard's Hall

Plot Elements

The plot elements included in this analysis are the time and location setting, and the themes of the stories. The *Harry Potter* series takes place in the present, with PlayStations and cars and the slang word "cool." The series takes place in both the real and an alternate world. Harry lives with his relatives on Privet Drive, but he goes to school in a parallel world very different from the world he comes from, one that is accessed through the muggle world but hidden from them.

Time and location were tabulated for this study. Table 4 shows the breakdown of time and location in the books studied.

Table 4.

Plot elements of time and location, by frequency and percentage.

TIME	f	%	LOCATION	f	%
Present	6	21	Real World	11	38
Past	7	24	Alt. World	9	31
Both	1	3	Both	5	17
N/A	15	52	N/A	4	14
TOTAL	**29**	**100**		**29**	**100**

Because it is often difficult to determine a time period in a fantasy world, whether that world be the real world or an alternate one, or because time is often not important to the storyline, many fantasy books are vague about time. Over half of the books in this study did not place enough importance on the time period of the story to make it applicable.

Many fantasies leave location vague, as well. There may be a mention of a town or a country, but determination of location is often left up to the reader. And though a specific location, such as a forest or a sea, may be important to a plot, fantasy books take place in the real world, alternate worlds, and sometimes both in the same story. The importance of the setting to the plot of the story was not considered in this study.

As in the *Harry Potter* series, there were youth fantasy books that took place in the present, and there were some that take place both in the real world and an alternate world. The both-worlds books are listed below:

1. Islands in the Sky
2. The Lives of Christopher Chant
3. The Lost Years of Merlin
4. Princess Nevermore
5. So You Want to Be a Wizard

Specific locations, rather than the world or town, often provide the setting of the fantasy story. Table 5 reports specific locations utilized in the books

Table 5.

Specific locations for the setting of youth fantasy books, by frequency and percentage.

LOCATION SPECIFICS	f	%
Home	12	23
Forest/Wilderness	11	21
Castle	10	19
School	8	15
Water	6	11
Caves	6	11
TOTAL	**54**	**100**

School and home are the two most important locations in the *Harry Potter* books—and the two places where youth spend the majority of their time. Other books that make home and/or school important setting locations are:

1. The Boggart

2. Dragonsong
3. Ella Enchanted
4. The Enchanted Castle
5. The Folk Keeper
6. Half Magic
7. Hob and the Goblins
8. Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher
9. The Lives of Christopher Chant
10. Of Two Minds
11. A Plague of Sorcerers
12. Princess Nevermore
13. Redwall
14. Sandry's Book
15. A Wizard of Earthsea
16. Wizard's Hall

Youth fantasy books often include many themes. The *Harry Potter* series utilizes two major themes: Good vs. Evil (Harry must overcome Lord Voldemort) and Coming of Age/Self-discovery (Harry leaves his relatives and finally has the opportunity to discover who he is). Another prevalent theme in youth fantasy is that of Prophecy Fulfillment (when the main character fulfills a prophecy, frequently unaware of the prophecy). Table 6 shows the frequency of these three themes in the books analyzed. The "Other" category represents themes that do not fall under the other three (i.e. stories written to merely share the adventure, etcetera).

Table 6.

Themes found in youth fantasy books, by frequency and percentage.

THEME	f	%
Coming of Age/ Self-Discovery	21	41
Good vs. Evil	12	24
Prophecy Fulfillment	7	14
Other	11	22
TOTAL	**51**	**100**

The most common theme of youth fantasy, according to this study, is that of coming of age or self-discovery, as just like Harry Potter, many of the main characters in youth fantasy books go through the process of self-discovery. This is an important theme that youth can relate

to as they grow up and try to figure out who they are for themselves. Twenty-one of the books analyzed applied that theme. Twelve books also made use of the Good vs. Evil theme. Following are the ten books that employed both themes:

1. The Blue Sword
2. The Book of Three
3. The Golden Compass
4. The Lives of Christopher Chant
5. The Lost Years of Merlin
6. Of Two Minds
7. Perloo the Bold
8. A Plague of Sorcerers
9. Redwall
10. Wizard's Hall

Throughout the stories, Harry uses magic, plays sports, travels, battles, and goes on quests—each of these elements and adventures helps develop the themes. Table 7 displays the frequency of these thematic elements in the youth fantasy books analyzed.

Table 7.

Elements that enhance the themes of youth fantasy books, by frequency and percentage.

THEME ELEMENT	f	%
Magic	19	26
Travel	13	18
War/Battle	11	15
Education/Training	8	11
Quest	7	10
Sport/Competition	5	7
Powers	5	7
Time/Dimension Travel	5	7
TOTAL	**73**	**100**

Miscellaneous Elements

There are many other elements that determine the quality and style of youth fantasy. These include literary techniques such as point of view, use of poetry (poetic verse and rhyme were most frequently used as spells or songs in youth fantasy), alliteration and assonance, and

language style. In the *Harry Potter* series, the third person point of view is employed. Table 8 shows that most of the other youth fantasy books used in this study were also told from the third person point of view; very few were told from the first person, and none from the second person.

Table 8.

Point of view, by frequency and percentage.

POINT OF VIEW	f	%
First	4	14
Second	0	0
Third	25	86
TOTAL	**29**	**100**

Other miscellaneous elements tabulated were the use of a persistent or significant item, symbol, number; the need of a specific magical device to perform magic; the mortal enemy of the hero/heroine; being cognizant of the opposite sex and interested in them; feelings of hope and despair; and the use of other fantasy elements, such as mythical minor characters or creatures. The *Harry Potter* books make use of all of these components. Table 9 shows the frequency that each of these elements was found in the books used in this study.

Table 9.

The use of other elements in youth fantasy books, by frequency and percentage.

MISC. ELEMENTS	f	%
Fantasy Elements	20	28
Magical Device	13	18
Sexual Awareness	12	17
Hope/Despair	11	15
Persistent/Significant Item, Symbol, Number	11	15
Hero's/Heroine's Mortal Enemy	4	6
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

The most prevalent aspect was the use of other fantasy elements in the story. These included minor characters and creatures (trolls, mermaids, faeries, etcetera), the personification

of inanimate objects, and pieces of magic (dragon blood, moon power, wishing pool). Magical devices, or specific items used to create specific magic, were the next most common facet, followed by sexual awareness in the main character (this was most frequently identified as a crush, but sometimes marriages came about, as well).

A Final List

An overall comparison of the 29 books and the *Harry Potter* series determined the following books as those most similar to the *Harry Potter* books by subgenre, main and secondary characters, setting and theme. The books are arranged by the number of similarities and then alphabetically:

1. The Lives of Christopher Chant (6)
2. Plague of Sorcerers (6)
3. Lost Years of Merlin (5)
4. Of Two Minds (5)
5. Wizard of Earthsea (5)
6. Wizard's Hall (5)
7. The Blue Sword (4)
8. The Golden Compass (4)

(See Appendix D for summaries of books.)

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to determine youth fantasy books with elements similar to the *Harry Potter* books, a series that has recently become popular with youth. The popularity of this series has made it necessary for librarians, teachers, and others to be familiar with and able to recommend similar books.

All the books analyzed for this study were youth fantasy books, and in that are similar to the *Harry Potter* books. Particular elements of the *Harry Potter* series were put into a coding sheet which was used to analyze each book in this study. The major foci of the coding sheet were fantasy subgenre, main and secondary characters, setting, and themes of the books. Other miscellaneous elements were included, as well. The results were tabulated, presented in graphs, and compared with the *Harry Potter* series. For each main element, a list of books that were categorically the same to *Harry Potter* was given. This resulted in a final list of eight comparable books that youth can read when they have finished the Harry Potter books and are looking for others (see Appendix D).

There were weaknesses to this study and points that could be improved upon through further investigation. Some of the books in the final list do not read similarly to the *Harry Potter* books—though the themes and characters may be similar, the styles are different. Much of the style and flavour of a book is achieved through the writing, and not merely through a type of character or location or theme. An analysis of the writing style of the books would provide a strong supplement for recommending similar fantasy books. The types of adventures that the characters participate in, personality traits of the characters, and books written by the same authors would also be worth considering in additional analysis.

Appendix A: Youth Fantasy Book Reading List

This list presents the books read and tabulated for this research paper. The book title is followed by the series title (if there is one) and then by the author, place, original publisher, and initial copyright date. (Current publishers may differ from those included here.)

Blue Sword, The. Damar. Robin McKinley. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1982.
Boggart, The. Susan Cooper. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993.
Book of Three, The. Prydain. Lloyd Alexander. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964.
Dealing With Dragons. The Enchanted Forest Chronicles. Patricia C. Wrede. New York: Scholastic, 1990.
Dragonsong. Dragonriders of Pern/Harper Hall Trilogy. Anne McCaffrey. New York: Atheneum, 1976.
Ella Enchanted. Gail Carson Levine. New York: HarperTrophy, 1997.
Enchanted Castle. E. Nesbit. London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1907.
Folk Keeper, The. Franny Billingsly. New York : Atheneum, 1999.
Golden Compass, The. His Dark Materials. Philip Pullman. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995.
Half Magic. Edward Eager. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1954.
Hob and the Goblins. William Mayne. New York: D. Kindersley, 1993.
I Am Mordred. Nancy Springer. New York: Philomel Books, 1998.
Islands in the Sky. Voyage of the Basset. Tanith Lee. New York: Random House, 1999.
Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher. Magic Shop Series. Bruce Coville. San Diego : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991.
Lives of Christopher Chant, The. Chrestomanci Series. Diana Wynne Jones. New York: Beech Tree, 1998.
Lost Years of Merlin. The Lost Years of Merlin. T.A. Barron. New York: Philomel Books, 1996.
Never Trust a Dead Man. Vivian Vande Velde. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1999.
Of Two Minds. Carol Matas. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.
Perilous Gard, The. Elizabeth Marie Pope. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.
Perloo the Bold. Avi. New York: Scholastic Press, 1998.
Plague of Sorcerers. Mary Frances Zambreno: San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991.
Princess Nevermore. Dian Curtis Regan. New York: Scholastic, 1995.
Redwall. Redwall. Brian Jacques. New York: Avon Books, 1986.
Sandry's Book. Circle of Magic. Tamora Pierce. New York: Scholastic, 1997.
Savage Damsel and the Dwarf, The. Gerald Morris. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
So You Want to Be a Wizard. Diane Duane. New York : Delacorte Press, 1983.
Which Witch?. Eva Ibbotson. New York: Puffin Books, 1979.
Wizard of Earthsea. The Earthsea Cycle. Ursula Le Guin. New York: Bantam Books, 1968.
Wizard's Hall. Jane Yolen. San Diego: Magic Carpet Books, 1991.

Appendix B: Youth Fantasy Book Coding Sheet

Title _____
Series Title _____
Author _____
Number in Series _____ **Pages** _____ **Publication Date** _____

Fantasy Subgenre
___Alternate Worlds
___Myth & Legend
___Bestiary
___Magic Realism
___Literary Fairy Tale
___Other: _____

Main Character (& name)
___Human ___Male ___Youth ___Magical
___Other: _____ ___Female ___Adult ___Orphan

Secondary Characters
___Royalty/Nobility ___Animal ___Muggle ___Enemy
___Witch/Wizard ___Mystical Beast ___Friend ___Other:_____
___Parent/Relative ___Mythical Being ___Teacher

Plot Elements
Setting
Time: present
past
both
n/a
Location: real world
alt. world
both
n/a
Location specifics: forest/wilderness, castle, school, home, water, caves

Theme
___Good vs. Evil
___Coming of Age/Self-discovery
___Prophecy Fulfillment
___Other: _____

Specific elements: war/battle, travel, sports, magic (good/evil), powers, time/dimension travel, education/training, quest, shapeshifting

Literary Techniques
Point of view: 1 2 3
___alliteration & assonance
___onomatopoeia
___poetic verse/rhyme
___puns/play on/with words

Miscellaneous
___persistent/significant item, symbol, number
___magical device
___hero's/heroine's mortal enemy
___sexual awareness/sexuality
___hope and/or despair
___fantasy elements:

Appendix C: Tables

Table 1.

Fantasy subgenres of youth fantasy books, by frequency and percentage.

SUBGENRE	f	%
Magic Realism	13	43
Alternate Worlds	10	33
Myth & Legend	3	10
Bestiary	2	7
Literary Fairy Tale	1	3
Other	1	3
TOTAL	**30**	**100**

Table 2.

The attributes of the main character, in frequency and percentage.

BEING	f	%	SEX	f	%	AGE	f	%
Human	25	86	Male	13	45	Youth	25	86
Other	4	14	Female	11	38	Adult	1	3
			Multiple Chars.	5	17	N/A	3	10
TOTAL	**29**	**100**		**29**	**100**		**29**	**100**

OTHER	f	%
Magical	15	52
Orphan	14	48
TOTAL	**29**	**100**

Table 3.

The main characteristic of secondary characters by frequency, percentage of total secondary characters, and percentage found in books analyzed.

SECONDARY CHARACTERS	f	% of total	% of books
Friend	23	21	79
Enemy	17	15	59
Witch/Wizard	14	13	48
Parent/Relative	12	11	41
Royalty/Nobility	8	7	28
Animal	8	7	28
Teacher	7	6	24
Other	7	6	24
Mythical Being	5	5	17
Muggle	6	5	21

Mystical Beast	4	4	14
TOTAL	**111**	**100**	

Table 4.

Plot elements of time and location, by frequency and percentage.

TIME	f	%	LOCATION	f	%
Present	6	21	Real World	11	38
Past	7	24	Alt. World	9	31
Both	1	3	Both	5	17
N/A	15	52	N/A	4	14
TOTAL	**29**	**100**		**29**	**100**

Table 5.

Specific locations for the setting of youth fantasy books, by frequency and percentage.

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School	8	15
Water	6	11
Caves	6	11
TOTAL	**54**	**100**

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TOTAL	**51**	**100**

Table 7.

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Travel	13	18
War/Battle	11	15

Education/Training	8	11
Quest	7	10
Sport/Competition	5	7
Powers	5	7
Time/Dimension Travel	5	7
TOTAL	**73**	**100**

Table 8.

Point of view, by frequency and percentage.

POINT OF VIEW	f	%
First	4	14
Second	0	0
Third	25	86
TOTAL	**29**	**100**

Table 9.

The use of other elements in youth fantasy books, by frequency and percentage.

MISC. ELEMENTS	f	%
Fantasy Elements	20	28
Magical Device	13	18
Sexual Awareness	12	17
Hope/Despair	11	15
Persistent/Significant Item, Symbol, Number	11	15
Hero's/Heroine's Mortal Enemy	4	6
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

Appendix D: Final Book List and Summaries

Lives of Christopher Chant, The. Chrestomanci Series. Diana Wynne Jones, 1998.

Christopher Chant is in training to become the next Chrestomanci (or the controller of all magic in the world) because he has nine lives, but he doesn't feel like a magician and fights his calling as hard as he can. But he becomes an important player in a battle with rebel sorcerers when the current Chrestomanci's lives are scattered and needs rescued, and other magicians need protection and guidance.

Plague of Sorcerers. Mary Frances Zambreno, 1991.

Jermyn, a newly-apprenticed wizard whose magic only appears occasionally, and Delia, his untraditional skunk familiar, must find a way to stop a magic plague that strikes against the wizards in the Empire. When his aunt and his teacher and other great wizards in the Empire become incapacitated, Jermyn discovers his strength and the truth behind the plague.

Lost Years of Merlin. T.A. Barron, 1996.

Spat out by the sea, the boy lay on the rocks with no memory and no name but one he is convinced is fake. After a few confusing years of life with a woman who says she is her mother, the boy decides to discover who he is and what his past and future hold, but when he traverses the ocean and enters an unknown land, he comes across secrets and powers and a compelling destiny.

Of Two Minds. Carol Matas, 1995.

Princess Lenora and Prince Coren are two royals who possess extraordinary mental powers. They are taken to a foreign land where their powers are taken away and they are kept captive. They realize that the destruction of their world is the goal of their captor and must find a way to save themselves, their world, and other worlds.

Wizard of Earthsea. The Earthsea Cycle. Ursula Le Guin, 1968.

Sparrowhawk is a reckless youth training in sorcery and an apprentice to the Master Wizard when he unleashes a terrible shadow upon the world. His attempts to conquer the evil he loosed and restore the balance takes him on journeys and adventures that test him, his spirit, his magic, and his will.

Wizard's Hall. Jane Yolen, 1991.

Thornmallow (once called Henry), a young apprentice wizard who feels less than magical, is the 113th student at Wizard's Hall—the last to be admitted that year and the student who is supposed to be a key wizard. He feels inadequate, but he tries—even though he messes up every spell. Yet somehow he saves the Wizard's Hall from The Quilted Beast and its evil master by trusting and believing in himself and *trying*.

Blue Sword, The. Robin McKinley, 1982.

Harry, bored with her sheltered life in the remote orange-growing colony, is kidnapped by the powerful golden-eyed king of the Hillfolk, and strong magic is discovered in her. The Lady Aerin appears in her visions and Harry learns of a destiny to save a people, and she learns of her right to wield the power of the sword, the blue sword Gonturan that has not been wielded since the Lady Aerin carried it in battle.

Golden Compass, The. His Dark Materials. Philip Pullman, 1995.

Lyra Belacqua, accompanied by her daemon, is a carefree young girl being raised at Oxford University. Until "Gobblers" begin taking children and using them as part of a sinister experiment. Lyra discovers the plot of the Gobblers and begins a quest with the gyptians to save the kidnapped children from this pain and horror. Meanwhile, she has no idea that this quest and the accompanying battle are part of her destiny.

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